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AUTHOR Glancy, Keith E.
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ABSTRACT

The latest information on the continuing education unit (CEU) from the National Task Force assigned to its development is the 1970 interim report. There are two purposes of the CEU: to establish a unit to record the participation of individuals in continuing education to verify their educational experience and to provide uniform data and records. If the entire definition of the CEU is applied to problems in using the unit, most of the problems will be solved. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools adopted Standard Nine which dictates the use of CEU for all continuing education activities of a noncredit nature, and that the units be translated into fulltime equivalent students. Guidelines are being developed for CEU implementation. Many institutions are now using the CEU; the Univ. of Akron has published a catalog listing CEU values for each course. A computerized system for recording and retrieving information on individuals earning CEU has been developed. How the CEU will relate to the college credit in non-traditional degree programs is a problem for discussion. (AG)

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Panel Topic: NEW FORMS OF RECOGNIZING LEARNING: PRACTICES AND PROSPECTS

Speaker's Topic: THE CONTINUING EDUCATION UNIT: UPDATE

Speaker: Dr. Keith E. Glancy, Director, Division of Special Programs and Projects, Evening College, The Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland.

The assignment for this particular segment of the program is to update your information on the continuing education unit. If the purpose is to update, I must assume that you are somewhat familiar with the unit, that you have been exposed to its purposes and objectives.

I would like, however, to repeat the definition. "One continuing education unit is ten contact hours . . ." But don't stop reading the definition at that point. That is only the beginning of the definition. "One continuing education unit is ten contact hours of participation in an organized continuing education experience under responsible sponsorship, capable direction and qualified instruction." If you will use that definition, all of it, just as it stands and apply all the elements in it to your programs you will be able to answer about ninety percent of your questions.

Now let me do a little updating. As I field questions, people keep asking, "What recent information do you have?" Actually, about the latest information that has come from the National Task Force is the interim report, published in 1970, which many of you have received in the past. A limited number of copies are available from the NUEA Washington office or from Bill Turner, chairman of the task force.

The purposes of the c.e. unit, at least the major purposes, can be listed in a one-two order. The primary purpose that the National Task Force set out to fulfill was to establish a unit to record the participation of individuals in

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continuing education, specifically noncredit continuing education. This provides individuals with a method of verifying their educational experience, which in most cases they cannot do at present. It is a quantifying unit to apply to the educational experience, the total experience, and a number of different programs or experiences can be added together. Try doing that under our present system! The primary purpose, therefore, is to give the individual participant some permanent record of his educational activity outside the formal credit system.

The second major purpose of the c.e. unit is to provide a method of accumulating data. Again we are quantifying continuing education, but this time not for the individual student, but for the institution, or further down the line, for the system, the state, or the nation.

As you know, most of our statistics on continuing education have been gathered on the basis of registrations. A single registration may represent a one-hour attendance at a program. It may also represent as much as a 200-hour input into a major short course. Collecting this data on the basis of registrations does not give us the kind of information we want or need. We will admit readily that the c.e. unit will not give us perfect data, but certainly we can supply data that relates much better than at a ratio of 200 to 1.

I am sure you can recognize the importance of having this data available in your own institution, of using it for planning purposes and for budget purposes. The data will be used in some cases for determining appropriations from state legislatures, for allocating funds between divisions or functions in the institution. This then is the second major objectives of the c.e. unit--to provide uniform data and records.

One of the major problems we have noted in using the unit is the problem of applying it to specific continuing education activities. Let me repeat, if you use the definition, all of it, you will answer most of your questions--solve

most of your problems. There are serious and valid questions being raised relative to assigning c.e. units for conferences of one or two days in length. Conference type programs as a general group need to be evaluated very carefully to determine whether or not units should be awarded, whether they indeed meet the criteria spelled out in the definition of a unit. The difficulty of determining individual participation, of keeping track of those actually in attendance, also poses a very difficult problem in many conference situations.

For most evening classes or organized short courses you will want to record the participation of the individual students. For other types of instruction you will have to evaluate the experience--and I say you because the basic evaluation is going to be done by someone in the division of continuing education or extension. As one of our colleagues said, "Let's remember that this is essentially an extension and continuing education unit, and let everybody know that it is our unit. They can use our unit if they want to in other parts of the university, but it's still our unit."

During the past year there have been several things happening relative to the continuing education unit which relate to a comment I made about two years ago that we had a bear by the tail and our major problem would be to hang on. At this point I think it is a little questionable whether or not we can hang on, because the bear is really moving.

The primary happening, as many of you know, is that the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools adopted Standard Nine, which says, in effect, that all continuing education activities of a noncredit nature will be reported in terms of continuing education units and the units will be translated into fulltime equivalent students. This gives you pause to think. This is where you move into the funding by the state legislature. The University System of Georgia is working on the application of Standard Nine, and the state legislature provides funds to

the individual institutions in the system on the basis of fulltime equivalent student load, the FTE from continuing education units based on noncredit continuing education. The impact has yet to be fully assessed. I will let you imagine what it may be.

The Southern Association has accepted Standard Nine. It is on the books; it is effective now, technically speaking. Practically speaking, of course, it will become effective as soon as the individual institutions can put it into effect. The leadership in developing guidelines was taken by the University System of Georgia, a group of 27 institutions, that has established committees to make recommendations for implementation of the Standard. The committee on the c.e. unit has submitted a working paper which presents one model for the use of the c.e. unit within the system. This report has just been released. While it probably will be revised again before it finally is adopted, it goes into effect on July 1 in Georgia institutions. You may want to get a copy of the final report; it should be available from the Southern Association, specifically from the person primarily responsible for Standard Nine, Dr. Grover Andrews (795 Peachtree Street, N.E., Atlanta, Georgia 30308).

The c.e. unit is being used by several institutions--has been in use since the pilot project was instituted a year ago last fall, almost two years now. One of the most interesting brochures I have received, however, is not from one of the pilot institutions. In fact, it is not even from one of our member institutions. It happens to be from the University of Akron. Under each course title is a continuing education unit value for that particular course. Since most of the courses operate on a similar format, most of them are listed for 1.4 c.e.u. or 2.8 c.e.u. A variety of program areas are included--communications skill, electronics, humanities and fine arts, mathematics, and others. As far as I know, the University of Akron is the first institution to publish their course listings with a c.e. unit value included in it.

As many of you know, the University of Missouri-Rolla, under the direction of Dean Lorey, has developed a complete computerized system for recording and retrieving information on individuals earning c.e. units. I would suggest that any of you interested in details on the system should contact Dean Lorey. He and his staff have done a good, I would even say an outstanding, job on this computer program.

Outside of educational institutions, the American Nursing Association, through its Commission on Continuing Education, has accepted a recommendation to use the c.e. unit in continuing nursing education. That recommendation is before the ANA at its annual meeting currently being held in Chicago. The more basic issue being considered is related, and that is whether or not continuing education will be a requirement for continued membership in the association. I think the Chicago meeting should be very lively.

The association of veterinarians in Missouri is now using the continuing education unit; the nursing association in Arizona is now using the continuing education unit, and there are several other local associations and institutions that are either now using the unit or expecting to start using it very soon. I must also mention that West Virginia University is using the unit, especially for continuing education for dentists. I am sure there are others that I should mention that don't come to mind at the moment.

How do you put the unit into operation? What are your requirements for using the c.e. unit? Administrative requirements can be relatively limited. If you use a computer system like Missouri, however, you may have a different set of problems. For most institutions, though, it can be a relatively simple process. Within your organization--the continuing education or extension division--you have the responsibility for selecting the programs which you feel are worthy of being entered on the record of individual participants.

You have the responsibility for determining the number of units that will be awarded, and for making sure that there is a system of permanent records. We are recommending--the task force is recommending--that whenever possible the permanent records be in the central records unit of the institution. Where you have the capability within the continuing education operation, however, I see nothing wrong in maintaining these records in the division either on a temporary basis or even a permanent basis. One thing I would say, though, is that the requests for information from the participants over a period of time will come to the registrar. You must make sure your registrar is oriented to send them to the proper place if he does not maintain the records in his office.

Another question that may be asked is, "What can the c.e. unit contribute to the educational objectives of our continuing education program?" The unit is a tool and it is neither good nor bad. It will contribute as and of itself nothing to the educational process. But we are expecting that when we start applying the unit we are going to raise some questions, and in turn we will have to answer those questions and in so doing will be encouraged to improve the program. May I speculate on one way in which this may occur. By recording for the individual his participation in programs, hopefully, we will think more in terms of long-range -- shall we say life-long learning -- programs, sequential programs, one building upon the other, much better educational sequences than we have been offering in continuing education in general. There are a few such programs now in operation; I am anticipating that there will be many more.

One area that concerns the task force, and one that really caught us off guard, was the relationship between the continuing education unit and college credit. As the task force started its deliberations, credit for any kind of noncredit work was, in the traditional sense, unthinkable. Therefore, in the

deliberations we were very, very careful to make this plain. This unit was to be used for those kinds of educational activities for which academic credit would not and could not be awarded. To make sure that we were kept on the straight and narrow path we invited a representative from the National Commission on Accrediting to meet regularly with the task force.

As you well know, within the last year, and especially within the last six months, non-traditional degrees have become a favorite topic of discussion. In such a discussion you immediately consider educational experiences which previously were not considered, and these include the kinds of experiences that ordinarily would receive continuing education units. We do not have an answer right now as to how this problem should be approached. My own feeling is that as we award continuing education units, we should award them on the basis on which they have been designed. If anyone or any institution thereafter wants to give degree credit for that educational experience, let that institution or organization evaluate the experience in terms of its own educational objectives. We cannot, in offering a continuing education program, outguess what these objectives will be for all institutions and all types of programs.

I believe that updates the situation fairly well. I will be happy to answer a few questions now or to talk with you individually after the meeting.